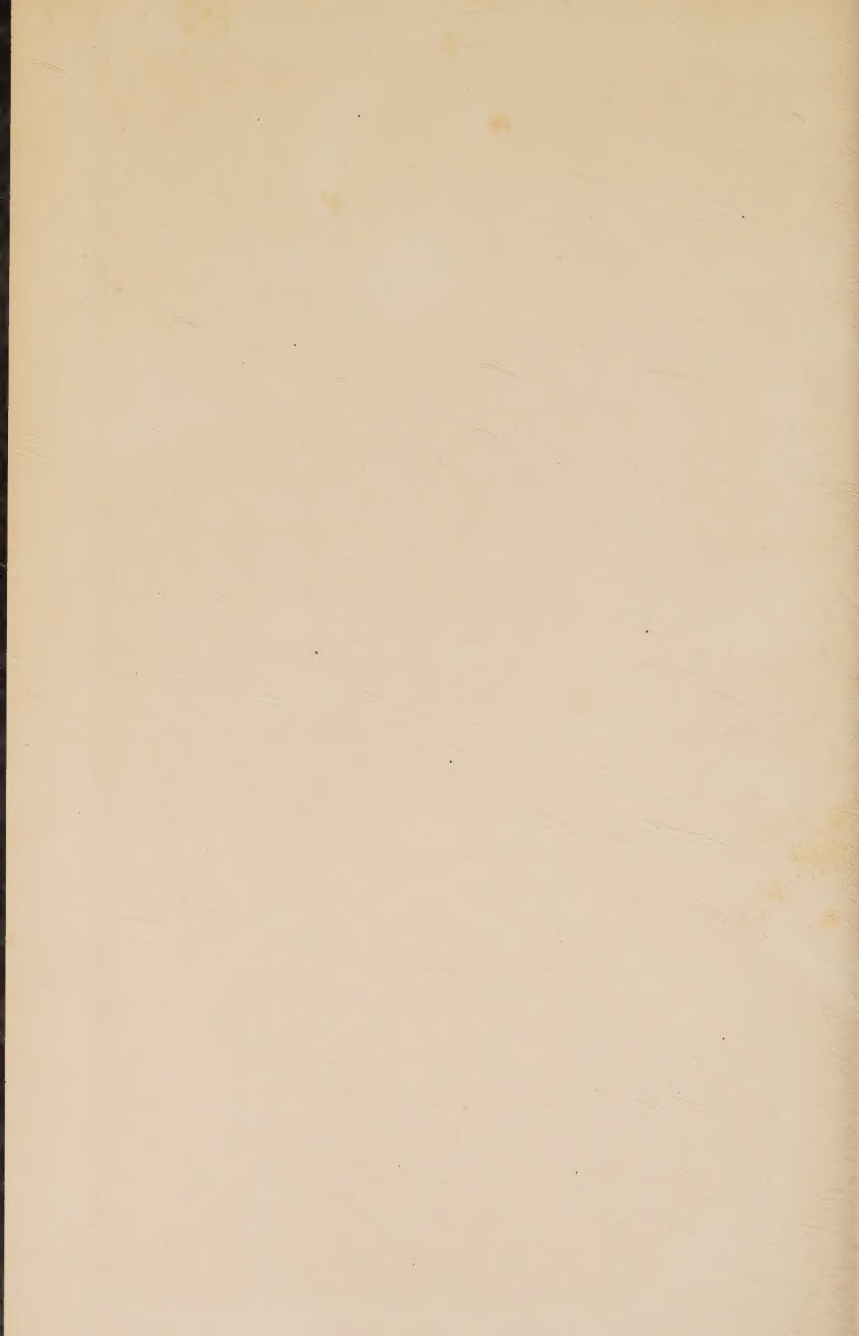


CLARET

H. WARNER ALLEN











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*The greater part of the following essay on Claret
has been extracted from "The Wines of France."
(T. Fisher Unwin Ltd.)*

CLARET

BY H. WARNER ALLEN

AUTHOR OF "THE WINES OF FRANCE"

"Le vin des rois, le roi des vins"

Motto of GRUAUD LAROSE

T. FISHER UNWIN LTD
LONDON: ADELPHI TERRACE

"Let the multitude perish then, which was born in vain ; and let my Grape be kept, and my Plant ; for with great labour have I made it perfect."—2 Esdras, ix, 22.

*First published in 1924
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CHARENTE

INFÉRIEURE



CLARET

GREAT wine is a work of art. It produces a harmony of pleasant sensations, which appeal directly to the æsthetic sense, and at the same time sharpens the wit, gladdens the heart, and stimulates all that is most generous in human nature. Its proper appreciation demands a certain education on the part of the drinker. For in that appreciation the three senses of sight, smell, and taste are all concerned, and the impressions which it causes are exceedingly delicate in their multiplicity and almost defy analysis. Moreover, wine is a living thing, not a mere chemical composition; like any living organism, it is young, grows old, and eventually decays and dies, the cycle of its life depending on that of the fermentation microbes which bestow on it its nature and excellence.

A great Claret is the king of all natural wines, and in the present writer's opinion the highest perfection of all wines that have ever been made. It is delicate and harmonious beyond all others; the manifold sensations that it produces are of the most

exquisite subtlety, and their intensity is so perfectly balanced and their quality so admirably harmonised that there is no clash or predominance, but bouquet, aroma, velvet, body, are all blended into an ideal whole. For the thorough appreciation of a Château Margaux or Latour, the wine-lover must be possessed with the acutest sense of *nuances*, of those subtle shades of taste and fragrance, which are delights that belong exclusively to great wines. For this reason Claret makes serious demands on the powers of appreciation of the drinker. Its beauties are never obvious, but all the more fascinating for their elusiveness. Also it possesses the simplicity of a supreme work of art : no other wine needs so little manipulation in the making ; indeed it might almost be said to make itself, though this very fact renders the task of the wine-grower more difficult. The Bordeaux wine-grower is not concerned with finding artificial substitutes for nature, but all his efforts are directed to preventing nature being impeded in her task and in enabling that task to be accomplished in the most favourable conditions.

The word Claret is of very ancient origin. It is derived from the French "clairet," which is the same as the mediaeval Latin "vinum clarum." Its original meaning is a wine of a very light red colour, which was made from vineyards with both red

and white grapes that were gathered and fermented together. This method of wine-making was not confined to Bordeaux; not so long ago a certain proportion of white grapes was grown in several of the best red Burgundy vineyards, as they were thought to increase delicacy and *finesse* while making the colour less dark. For some reason, however "clairet" was taken in England as a generic name for all red Bordeaux wines, though as a rule nowadays there is no admixture of white grapes and their colour is far darker than the word suggests.

The wine region of Bordeaux is very large, and great quantities of excellent beverage wines as well as those famous Clarets which are known throughout the world are produced in the Gironde department. For red wines the principal districts are Médoc, Graves, and Saint Emilion with Pomerol, which produce wines of great breed and distinction, while large quantities of ordinary beverage wines are derived from the Côtes, the hills which rise above the right banks of the Garonne and Dordogne (Saint Emilion and Pomerol excepted), from Entre-deux-Mers, the triangle between these two rivers, and the Palus or reclaimed marsh land, with alluvial soil too rich for the growth of great wine, running along the banks of these rivers and their estuary.

A glance at the map will indicate the

exact position of these districts. At Bordeaux the Gironde, the estuary of the Garonne, is running almost due north, and its left or western bank, from the town northwards to the Atlantic, with the exception of some narrow strips at the river's edge, which belong to the Palus, forms Médoc, which is the finest wine-growing district in the world. South of the town, Graves lies on the same bank of the river, from which it is separated by a continuous strip of Palus, until it comes to the Sauternes or white wine country, a much smaller region, which runs along the Ciron, a tributary of the Garonne. Some miles north of Bordeaux the river Dordogne runs into the Garonne which thenceforward becomes the Gironde, and the peninsula thus formed is known as Entre-deux-Mers. Beyond Entre-deux-Mers, on the hills north of the Dordogne, lie Saint-Emilion and Pomerol, and the quality of their soil and wines differs very considerably from that of the districts on the other side of the two rivers.

There is a certain monotony in the vineyards which surround Bordeaux, but it is a monotony with a fascination of its own like the monotony of olive-yards. Glimpses of the pleasant waters of the Gironde and of the Dordogne contrast with the placid green sea of vine-leaves, and in the vintage sunshine the white châteaux and prosperous little villages, nestling among their

trees, relieve the eye with refreshing shade and an atmosphere of peace. The vintage as a rule begins in the second fortnight of September, and from that time onwards it is a hard matter to find any Bordelais business man in his native town. Everyone who is anyone in particular has gone to his country estate to superintend the vintage in person and to make the most of that joyous ever-recurring festival, which since time immemorial has been the great, yearly occasion of gaiety and thanksgiving.

In the country the air is laden with the smell of the must in the wine-press, the sweet scent of the bruised grape, the exhilarating perfume of the vintage. If the vintage is a time of rejoicing, it is also a time of hard, unceasing labour. As far as the eye can see, the vines spread their green monotony like an unruffled lake, broken only by the island of some ancient château with slate-roofed, rounded towers, and by the figures of the vendangeurs standing waist-deep in the ordered rows, or by the carts with their patient oxen bearing aloft the great barrels piled with grapes. Beneath, half hidden in the leaves, hang cluster on cluster of purple grapes, the divine gift of Bacchus. Their luxuriance seems a miracle, springing as it does from so stony and so scant a soil.

The horses and the solemn oxen are decked

with fringed trimmings to keep away the flies, and they stand motionless by the hour, until their precious load is complete. The colours worn by the vendangeurs are sober and quiet; the black sun hats of the women and the blue shirts of the men contrast boldly with the sea of green. Their work marks the end of the year's struggle with nature, a struggle that is never really ended, for, as Virgil knew, the training the vine in the way in which it should go is a task which demands unceasing toil, unerring skill, and infinite patience.

Redit agricolis labor actus in orbem,
Atque in se sua per vestigia volvitur annus.

As the grapes are piled in the tubs, they are forced down tight by men armed with heavy sticks. The master's eye controls all the operations of the vintage, and it is the pride of the nobleman of Bordeaux that, like his fathers before him, he superintends in person the making of his wine.

The grapes are brought by the cart to the *cuvier* or *pressoir*, where there is a scene of bustle and activity, which is quite bewildering after the tranquillity of the vineyards outside. The sweet smell of the bruised grape, the presence of running water on every side, and the cool fresh air, pouring in through open doors and windows, recall the refreshing cleanliness and sweetness of a dairy on a hot summer day.

Without scrupulous cleanliness and abundant oxygen, there can be no good wine.

The stalks are removed either by a simple machine, rather like a mangle in appearance, or by passing the clusters through a wide-meshed sieve, and in the process the fruit is bruised rather than crushed, so that the pips are not broken. Then the semi-liquid must is poured into the fermenting vats, for red wine is made by allowing the grape juice to ferment along with the skins and pips, which contain the colouring matter of the grapes, and for white wine are removed after the unfermented juice has been squeezed out of the fruit. The colour of the wine depends on these conditions and not, as is sometimes imagined, on the colour of the grapes. It is true that red wine is not made from white grapes, but white wines are often made from black grapes: more black grapes than white are used for the making of Champagne.

In the vats a magic transformation takes place. The grape juice is turned into wine by the action of the *saccharomyces*, the fermentation microbes, which are present on the outside of the grape skins, lurking in invisible millions in the bloom of the fruit. The first or boisterous fermentation, during which the wine foams and bubbles, lasts from a week to ten days. Then when practically all the grape sugar in the must has been transformed by the microbes into

alcohol, the wine is drawn off into oak casks where it matures. At regular intervals it is racked, that is, drawn off from one cask, leaving the lees behind, and transferred to another cask.

At the end of the second year or a little later, light, ordinary wines should be ready for the bottle, but fine, full-bodied wines must remain in cask for three or even four years. In the cask the wine is still to some extent in contact with the air, and Pasteur has shown that it is through the action of the air that wine slowly gains the qualities of age. The mysterious ethers and esters which bestow on wine its bouquet and aroma are the work of oxygen, and it is the wine-grower's business to transfer his wine from the cask to the bottle, in which, owing to the scarcity of air, the process will go on much more slowly, just at the moment when a maximum of ethers has been formed and before the action of the air has gone too far and begun to deprive the wine of its strength.

Before the wine can be bottled, another operation is required, that of fining. The heavier impurities, thrown out by the wine into the lees, have been removed by racking, but the lighter are still floating in the wine. It is the purpose of fining to get rid of these floating waste products, so that the wine may be perfectly clear. The principle is simple. Certain substances—white of egg,

isinglass, and gelatine are those most commonly used—if beaten up with the wine, will combine with the tannin it contains and form a kind of very fine net. This net will slowly sink to the bottom, carrying down with it all the impurities in suspension in the liquid, so that the wine can be drawn off clear and bright.

Then comes the final process of bottling. It should be carried out in dry, bright weather, and the wine should be exposed to contact with the air as little as possible in order to preserve the delicacy of its bouquet. A good Bordeaux has by this time lost the purple of its youth, and has taken on a deep tile-red colour, which shows that it is ready for the bottle. At first it rebels against its new home. It has what the wine-growers call “bottle-fever,” from which it will recover after five or six months’ rest. Thenceforward, so long as the bottles are kept lying down in a suitable place and at a suitable temperature, the wine will steadily develop of itself and improve, until, perhaps, after forty years or more in the case of a great wine, it has reached the highest perfection of which it is capable.

It might seem from what has been said above that the art of wine-appreciation is difficult and hazardous. It is true that a complete appreciation of the finest qualities of the greatest wine demands considerable experience and a cultivated taste. On the

other hand, the surface charm of any good sound wine is as obvious to the most inexperienced wine-drinker, gifted with normal powers of perception, as the fascination of a tuneful ballad to the hearer, possessed of an unskilled but naturally musical ear.

The nice taste of the connoisseur simply means squeezing out of the pleasurable qualities of wine every drop of enjoyment which they contain. That taste needs nothing more than time and experience for its formation, and the novice cannot do better than begin with a study of Claret, the most natural of all natural wines, at once wholesome, delicate, and delightful. He will have no difficulty in obtaining the instruction in the elements of wine-tasting, which is an essential preliminary. He has only to purchase his wine from a trustworthy wine merchant with a reputation to lose and treat him as his guide, counsellor, and friend. So he will receive that guidance and advice which is necessary for the direction and development of his faculties of appreciation, and be welcomed into the great and joyous freemasonry of wine-lovers.

The study of wine is a fascinating hobby, and the beginner will not find it unduly expensive. A sound beverage Claret can be bought at from 24s. to 48s. a dozen, and once the attraction of such wines has been realised, a first step has been taken to-

wards the achievement of connoisseurship. Beer and spirits can afford no such satisfaction, and from every point of view Claret is a far more healthy beverage. The idea that Claret is an acid wine is a pure delusion. It is the least acid of all wines, and can safely be recommended in cases of gout and rheumatism. In the Gironde, where Claret is naturally the staple drink of the whole population, gout and rheumatism are practically unknown.

The student of wine may be certain of procuring from a good wine merchant a really sound natural wine, and from it he will learn to distinguish and enjoy that clean fruity fragrance of the grape which is the quality of all true wine and which is the basis of all bouquet and aroma. Its colour should be absolutely clear and straightforward, and should vary only in intensity when the light is seen through a greater or lesser volume of the liquid. Faked wines and chemical concoctions always fail in this last respect. Neither nose nor palate must be able to detect any unpleasant secondary odours or tastes lurking in the background.

The excellence of Claret is a gift of nature, and all the grower's art cannot remedy defects that may arise from unsatisfactory natural conditions. Consequently the quality of a Claret to a great extent depends on the conditions of the year in which it

was grown. There are vintage years, good, bad, and indifferent, and the connoisseur will pay as much attention to the date of his wine as to the locality in which it was grown and made. But it is impossible to be categorical in the matter of vintage years. In the best vintage years certain crops may fail, and the wines of a great château may prove utterly disappointing. In a bad year one or two growths, more lucky than their neighbours, may turn out surprisingly successful. In this question the wine-drinker will be wise to be guided by the advice of his wine merchant, whose business it is to make a study of each vintage.

Generally speaking, however, he will be safe to regard the following vintages ready for immediate consumption, as worthy of high confidence and recommendation. For ordinary beverage wines he can rely on the vintages of 1917, 1918, and 1919. Clarets of 1914 and 1917, wines of distinction and developed bouquet, will be found excellent. Really great wines in perfect condition, admirable expressions of the rarest and most delicate qualities of Claret, may be chosen from the fine vintages of 1899, 1900, 1904, 1907, 1909, and 1911.

The student of wine will multiply his enjoyment and spare his purse if he embarks on the formation of a modest cellar. He could not begin better than by purchas-

ing for laying down some of the first-rate Clarets of 1917 and 1920, two beautiful years, which are still obtainable at very reasonable prices. The only trouble is that he will probably be assailed by the temptation of drinking his adorable 1917's, already so delightful, before full maturity has brought to fulfilment the rich promise of their youth.

It must be repeated that wine is not a chemical concoction. Nature has blended its elements so subtly and delicately, that the greatest of chemists can produce artificially nothing better than a despicable parody of wine. The qualities of natural wine are due partly to the conditions of the year in which it was grown, partly to the geographical position and soil of the vineyard. The king of Bordeaux grapes, the cabernet sauvignon, gives nothing more than an ordinary wine if it is removed from the soils it loves in Médoc and Graves.

So great is the variety of Clarets that it is impossible in the space available to do more than mention a few of the most famous wine-growing districts. In Médoc, Cantenac, Margaux, Saint Julien, Pauillac, Saint Estèphe, and in Graves, Pessac, and Léognan are all parishes of the highest renown with wines distinguished by special excellencies due to the soils and positions of their vineyards. At the end of this chapter on Claret will be found a list of

the greatest châteaux of Médoc, in order of merit according to the official classification of 1855, with the parishes in which their vineyards are situated. Pauillac, a commune of 5,000 inhabitants, with two first (Latour and Lafite), three second, one fourth, and eleven fifth growths, must rank as the greatest wine growing district in the world. Then Margaux, with the immortal first growth that bears its name, four second, five third, and one fourth growths; Saint Julien, with six second, two third, and five fourth growths; and Saint Estèphe, with two second growths, one third, one fourth, and one fifth.

There exists in England a curious delusion that Graves is purely a white wine district, though in point of fact it owes most of its renown to its red wines. These wines are remarkable for their brilliant colour and *finesse*. They lack to some extent the velvety smoothness and bouquet of Médoc, but they are fuller-bodied and generally have a longer life. They are produced by the same methods as those used in Médoc, which have been already described. Graves, it will be remembered, is the southern continuation of Médoc on the left bank of the Gironde. The district possesses one of the greatest, many experts say to-day the greatest, of all Bordeaux wines. Château Haut Brion is the only cru grown outside the sacred Médoc region

which is admitted to the list of classified Médocs, drawn up in 1855, and it is included, *primus inter pares*, in the first class with Margaux, Latour, and Lafite. Consequently it stands head and shoulders in reputation above all other Graves, and indeed of recent years its wine has again and again attained higher prices than the greatest Médocs. As a matter of fact, the commune of Pessac, with the vineyards of Haut Brion, is not very far outside Médoc, and there as elsewhere in Graves the methods of grape-growing and wine-production have been considerably improved of late years. The wines of Haut Brion have long been appreciated in England, and already in the sixteenth century, when the château was in the possession of the Pontac family, they were greatly prized on this side of the Channel.

The red wine of Graves was famous even before the renown of Médoc was established. In the Middle Ages heavy penalties were imposed upon any fraudulent wine-merchant who sought to deceive the public by selling as Graves the wines of any other district, Médoc included. Mr. André Simon declares that the red wine of Graves "was shipped to and known in England during the Middle Ages, when the Médoc was unclaimed marshland, the home of wild ducks and other wild fowl." It is rather surprising that, in spite of this great antiquity, there

is no classified list of Graves wines, though, apart from Haut Brion, there are in the district a number of fine crus which are regarded as equal to the second or third growths of Médoc. Thus Pessac, in addition to the incomparable Haut Brion, possesses a very interesting Graves in La Mission Haut Brion, which was founded in the seventeenth century by the *Prêcheurs de la Mission* of Saint-Vincent de Paul, who enlivened with their wines the gaiety of the tables of the Princes of the Church. It was a favourite wine of the Maréchal de Richelieu, great-nephew of the Cardinal, and he is said to have made in reference to it a remark which can be recommended to the attention of all Prohibitionists, from Viscountess Astor to Johnson surnamed Pussyfoot: "If God forbade drinking, would He have made this wine so good?" In the same commune, that very excellent wine, Château Pape Clément, which is very agreeably rich in tannin and iron, ranks among the most illustrious Graves. Its vineyards belonged in 1300 to Bertrand de Goth, Archbishop of Bordeaux. In 1305 its master was elected Pope, and he was torn away—not without regret for his wines, we may imagine—from the vineyards, which he left to his successor in the Archbishopric, Cardinal Arnaud de Canteloup. Bertrand de Goth took the title of Clément V, and for six hundred years his name has

clung to the château and its wines. Château Camponac, another noteworthy Graves, lies in the immediate neighbourhood of Pape Clément.

Another excellent Claret district is Saint Emilion, which is separated from Graves by two great rivers, the Garonne and the Dordogne.

The wines of St. Emilion have a very high reputation. The best known is the Château Ausone, which derives its name from the poet Ausonius, who lived and thrived during the Roman occupation. The yield of Château Ausone is very small, but the wine is esteemed by the Bordeaux connoisseurs among the finest of Clarets produced. Other famous growths are the Château Cheval-Blanc, Canon, and Clos Fourtet.

In the adjoining district of Pomerol are to be found the notable growths of Pétrus, L'Evangile, and La Conseillante.

In 1153 Henry II ascended the throne of England, and by his marriage with Eleanor of Aquitaine, the divorced wife of Louis VII of France, the great Duchy of Aquitaine, which comprised the basin of the Garonne, became attached to the English Crown. For the next three hundred years Bordeaux and Gascony remained loyal to their connection with England, and the wines of Bordeaux, then generally known as Gascon wines, imported under special privileges, at very low prices, made our country a

Claret-drinking nation. "During the twelfth century," writes Mr. Simon, "Gascon wine . . . was from three farthings to twopence a gallon, and it was fixed at sixpence per gallon in 1448." It was not till 1451, when Henry VI had lost all his French possessions except Calais, that Claret became scarce and expensive in England.

During those centuries of plentiful Claret, Saint-Emilion was as well known in England as it is to-day. The district or jurisdiction of Saint-Emilion was established and first defined by a charter of Edward I of England, granted on May 27, 1289, and confirmed again and again by French Kings from Charles IV and Francis I to Louis XIII. Louis XIV described Saint-Emilion as "a nectar for the gods," and its wines to-day must rank as the finest examples of the hill-grown wines of the Bordelais.

The foregoing brief summary of some elementary facts which the wine-lover ought to know will, it is hoped, be of assistance to the student. The wine-drinker will certainly enjoy his wine more fully and more intelligently if he knows something of its nature and the methods of its production.

But he is mainly concerned with wine as an artistic product, and from the æsthetic point of view an acquaintance with the great wine districts, a glimpse or two of the vintage and pleasant memories of

noble wines are advantages not to be despised, when the moment comes for weighing up the value of life—and one of the most fitting occasions for this solemn reckoning is to be found in the presence of an ancient wine. There are not so many satisfactions in existence as to justify the neglect of a single one.

Yet at the present day there is an evident danger that the gentle art of wine-drinking may be forgotten and disappear. As has been said, Bacchus demands a certain preparation from his votaries, and the sudden changes of fortune arising out of the war have impoverished those to whom wine was a familiar friend, and enriched a class which was, and often still is, as ignorant of wine as it is of poetry. Taxes and customs duties have made wine-drinking a luxury for the rich, and many of the rich have yet to learn how to appreciate. The half-witted fanaticism of Prohibition menaces the world with the suppression of that which maketh glad the heart of man, reproducing in our own time that soul-killing materialism which has always been the curse of humanity. What can the Puritan materialist know of spiritual values, and of all the generous thoughts and actions which wine has inspired? Antony Réal happily knew nothing of that wave of gloomy madness which was to sweep across the Atlantic, when he wrote :

“Great wines will always play a predominant part in our social relations ; they will always be a bond of union between folk of good company. How many enchanted hours do we owe to them ? Under their magnetic influence, the mind opens to all generous sentiments, the spirit becomes more subtle, the tongue more eloquent. They have the gift of developing delicacy of taste and spiritualising the pleasures of the tables.”

The question arises, How can good wine be drunk at the greatest advantage and with the maximum of appreciation ? And before it can be answered three factors must be considered, the wine-drinker, the wine, and the environment. The wine-drinker wishes to make the most of a great wine, “cette synthèse incomparable des produits d’un sol privilégié, élaborés par les nobles ceps d’origine millénaire, sous l’énergie des chauds rayons de soleil.” To begin with, he must be a man of some culture and intelligence ; he must realise that mankind, after more than four thousand years of perpetual toil, has, by working hand in hand with nature, produced a masterpiece of unique character for his enjoyment. It would be well that he should know something of the place where his wine was made, and of the manners of those who made it. Then he should be

aware that the tasting of wine is a delicate and complicated thing, which demands both reverence and experience.

He must have an eye appreciative of colour, a nose sensitive to the finest delicacies of perfume, and a tongue and palate capable of distinguishing and enjoying the most subtle savours. Full appreciation cannot be attained if either the sense of smell or of taste is impaired by catarrh or other indisposition. Weariness of any kind, even healthy muscular fatigue, is a foe to a discriminating taste: after violent exercise, all wines taste delicious, but the enjoyment of them is an animal satisfaction rather than an intellectual pleasure. The connoisseur will eschew tobacco for a reasonable period before he tastes a great wine, for it certainly deadens the perceptive faculty, though for some mysterious reason there is a friendly relation between the clean taste of a Sherry and the charm of the goddess Nicotine.

If tobacco deadens the appreciative power, what is to be said of cocktails? The majority of them are far more deleterious to the taste than a cigarette, and they could never have been invented in a country where good wine was appreciated. There is a gross vulgarity in the pleasurable sensation produced on the palate by such mixed drinks, and they have as much claim to respectful consideration as a strawberry ice. As a prelude to a meal,

their alcoholic content is far too high and their savour far too gross and obvious, so that they kill any fine wine that may follow them. The simpler mixtures of gin and bitters, gin and vermouth, and the like have the same fault of excessive alcoholic content, which is inclined to drown the subtler virtues of a wine, though they do not err so deeply since their taste is cleansing and preparative. There is no excuse for mixing bitters with sherry, unless the sherry is bad, and there is no excuse for drinking bad wine.

Yet cocktails and appetisers answer a definite demand in so far as they clean the palate and stimulate sensation. But the only real preparation for wine is wine, apart from the cleansing simplicity of an olive. The clean nutty flavour of a light Sherry has made it a favourite wine at the beginning of a meal, and if any harbinger of a fine Claret is required, a Dry Fino or Amontillado may be recommended.

As concerns the decanting of Claret, the English school of wine-lovers is very definite. Mr. E. J. Oldmeadow writes :

“ Almost every Claret worth drinking is worth decanting. Indeed, no Red Wines, with the exception of Ports from the wood, should be served from the original bottle. It is true that wines are sometimes found which contain so little sediment that the work seems to be thrown away : but, as

decanting cannot do any harm and will usually do a vast amount of good, every man who wishes to do what is right will make it a rule to decant every bottle of Claret."

Decanting presents no difficulty to anyone gifted with average eyesight and a steady hand. The bottle should be stood up for twenty-four hours before the cork is drawn, so that the light sediment may sink to the bottom. The cork should be removed with the aid of a corkscrew, which should possess a wide-spread thread with flattened edges. The ordinary gimlet type of corkscrew is effective for the hard corks of beer and cider, but is quite unsuitable for old-bottled wines, as it will break away the centre of the cork.

Very old corks are best dealt with by removing the neck of the bottle at a point immediately below the bottom of the cork. This can be accomplished by gently inserting a corkscrew, wrapping a cloth round the bottle for safety's sake, and giving a sharp upward blow with the back of a large knife below or under the ridge at the mouth of the bottle. It should result in a clean break and allow the cork and the top of the neck to be removed together.

While decanting, the bottle should be kept horizontal. On no account should it be tilted back from the time pouring has begun, until all the wine that is clear and

brilliant has been transferred to the decanter, for the back-wash of wine would loosen the sediment adhering to the sides of the bottle and shake up the whole deposit. A lighted candle or electric light should be placed behind the "flow" of the wine, which flow must not be interrupted nor the position of the bottle altered so long as the wine is brilliant ("candle-bright") and fit for the decanter. As soon as any deposit is seen to appear at the neck of the bottle, decanting must be stopped.

The wine basket or cradle may have its use in a restaurant where there is no time for decanting, always on condition that the cork is not first drawn with the bottle perpendicular. "To make the basket of any good," says that great and good wine-lover, Professor Saintsbury, "the *whole* of the contents should be poured into successive glasses, at only the necessary inclination, till the sediment is reached and no tilting back permitted." This is a counsel of perfection by no means easy of accomplishment, and drinkers will be well advised to have no truck with so hazardous an instrument and to be content with the surer method of decanting.*

Claret is a fragile and delicate work of art. A great part of its fascination

* The French school of wine-drinkers has its own views on decanting, and a full discussion of the problem will be found in "The Wines of France," pp. 36 to 40.

belongs to the wonderful combinations of perfumes and aromas which it gives off when, after long sojourn in the bottle, it is first brought into contact with the outer air. The moment during which Claret can be appreciated at its perfection is short-lived. It can never again recover those enchanting ethers, which are dissipated in the air after the bottle has been opened. For this reason Claret must be drunk as soon as opened, except in the case of very old wine when it must be given an hour or so to breathe and develop. Nothing but disappointment and disgust is to be earned by storing up heel taps for some future meal. The discerning wine-lover who loathes excess as he loathes the waste of good wine will be careful to provide his cellar with a complement of half-bottles. The small additional expense really represents a considerable economy.

Fine glass is a delight to the eye, and wine glasses should be chosen so that every virtue in the precious liquid they contain may be appreciated. Generally speaking, coloured glasses are an abomination, since they deliberately obscure one of wine's most glorious qualities, its appeal to the eye. There is no colour in glass, even in that marvellous Egyptian glass which has retained the divinity of its blue for four thousand years, that can compare with the rich and varying tints of an old vintage wine

when it is scrutinised through thin and perfectly transparent glass, now against the light, now against the whiteness of the table-cloth.

In principle, then, glasses should be colourless. They should also be as thin as possible, so that when required the heat of the hand may be promptly transferred to their contents, and as little as possible of the varying hues of the wine be lost. The unanimity of wine-lovers is on the side of glasses with stems, for they are very pleasant to hold and play with, and the warmth of the hand only reaches the wine when the drinker wishes it. As for shape, the expert prefers a tulip-shaped glass, so that the volatile elements forming the bouquet of the wine may be aspired as through a funnel with all their qualities concentrated by the smaller opening.

On one point the wine-lover should insist, the glass should be generously large. A horrid fashion prevails in England of filling wine glasses to the brim, as though to proclaim, not the host's open-handedness, but the wine as nothing worth. For a glass should be little more than half full, so that it can be tilted this way and that, and scientifically rotated, and a space should be left above the surface of the wine, where the subtle essences of the bouquet may gather. A full glass makes it impossible to do justice to a wine. For the same reason the tiny liqueur glass is

an insult to a good Cognac, the only liqueur demanding really delicate consideration.

Let the decanter be, like the wine-glass, of colourless clear glass, so that it may depend for all its colour on the wine inside it.

There is one further question to be discussed in connection with the presentation of wines, before we come to the crucial moment when the wine is about to fulfil the purpose for which it was made. At what temperature should wines be served? White wines should be a few degrees colder than the room, but not too cold. Cold reduces the impression produced on the senses by the alcoholic constituents of the wine, and gives greater value to the non-alcoholic elements of its bouquet, but in excess it also diminishes the faculties of taste. Red wines should be drunk at the temperature of the room, since warmth develops their bouquet; at the same time they should produce a sensation of freshness in the mouth, so that, as the mouthful of wine takes up heat from the tongue and palate, the gradual variations in its aroma may be enjoyed, as well as the variations that have taken place in its bouquet as a result of the hand gradually warming the glass. The heavier a wine, the colder it should be drunk, so that its alcoholic elements may not have excessive predominance.

The true wine lover will 'never forget that wine is as delicate as a flower, and

sensitive to every change in environment. Above all things it is sensitive to sudden changes of temperature. Therefore no one but a vandal will cook his Claret before the fire, or parboil its bottle in hot water, in order suddenly to raise its temperature to that of the room in which it is to be drunk. If a bottle has to be brought up straight from the cellar for some occasion of chance hospitality, the most that can safely be done is to warm the decanter slightly before the wine is poured into it. But it is better far in such circumstances to serve the wine at the temperature of the cellar, though it be too cold for the full development of its bouquet and aroma. For no wine-lover will grudge the trouble of holding the glass in cupped hands for such time as is necessary to warm its contents, and that trouble is rewarded by a most instructive appreciation of the gradual unfolding of bouquet and aroma under the magic influence of gentle stimulating warmth.

A curious idea prevails in England that to mix red and white wines is to mix drinks. In point of fact there is no mixing of drinks, in the bad sense of the term, so long as there is no departure from the produce of the grape. Cocktails are barbarous before wine; among other reasons because they generally prelude the grape with grain spirit, and Bacchus and Ceres wage internecine strife in our insides. No sane man,

however, would object to following up a white Graves or Chablis with a fine Bordeaux or Burgundy, any more than he would refuse a Fine Champagne as a fitting conclusion to a meal at which great wines have been drunk. Indeed, no small part of the skill needed for judicious ordering of wines lies in choosing them in such a way that each one will prepare the way for the next and ensure its full appreciation.

It is not everyone, unfortunately, who can order a dinner with wines and dishes scientifically and artistically arranged. For the wine-lover the food should simply be a frame for the wines, for however refined the cooking, the appeal of food is coarse and obvious and can make no claim to the subtle intellectual fascination provided by a great wine. It is true, however, that good wine needs good cooking and judicious selection of food for its full enjoyment, and much might be said as to the natural affinity between certain dishes and certain wines. The object which a host must set before him in ordering a dinner is to produce a masterpiece of delicate sensations by the mutual reactions of wines and food.

As concerns the selection of foods there are certain general principles to be observed. Fish is never a satisfactory background for Claret, and an anchovy savoury will ruin all its charm. Vinegar, again, is an enemy to wine, and there are many wine drinkers

who dislike its presence in a room in which great wines are being discussed. I have always fancied that the innate hostility between wine and vinegar lies at the root of the French objection to mint sauce. In a salad dressing its crudities are to some extent softened by the emolliency of oil. Vinegar is wine gone wrong, and it is not surprising that the noblest examples of the wine-grower's art should rebel against being associated with the degradation of their finest qualities.

When several wines are being served, light Claret comes in admirably with the entrée, while the great crus will follow with the roast. Game also demands a fine Bordeaux, one of the Big Four, Lafite, Latour, Margaux or Haut Brion, and its flavour is almost as effective as cheese in drawing out the full savour of the wine. Claret is much too dry a wine to be drunk with a sweet dish, as the contrast is inclined to make it seem harsh, while after cheese its full bouquet will be appreciated and no trace of roughness will remain. All the stronger cheeses bring out the aroma of wine to an amazing extent, and Grimod de la Reynière called Roquefort "*le biscuit des ivrognes.*"

Many wine lovers will sympathise with Professor Saintsbury when he argues that the best time to drink great wines is at the end of a meal, when the cloth is cleared, the

vulgar duty of eating accomplished and there is nothing to divert the attention from the miracle of wine. "On another point," writes the Professor, "I fear I still remain hopelessly English ; and that is the question of drinking the finest growths of red wine, be they of Bordeaux or Burgundy, with solid animal food. Good, sound middle growths with fine body and pleasant flavour, if you like ; while it is curious, and perhaps suggests a mystery, that with winged food, especially game, you may go a little beyond this in fineness of quality. But the aristocracy of wine, whatever its place of origin, to my taste rejects community and contemporaneity with such a comparatively plebeian business as eating. The more divine is Bacchus the more he resembles his divinest beloved in one point. He will have undivided attention."

In "Notes on a Cellar-Book," the Professor discusses very pleasantly what, if anything, may be eaten with after-dinner wine. "Olives and devilled biscuits are not bad, but I have never, despite a due devotion to Pallas, been such an enthusiast for the olive as some of my friends. And the devilled biscuit, a capital thing in itself, is rather violent for a fine wine. Plain Pass-over bread, or those 'Thin Captains,' which somewhat resemble it, seem to me best of all. Nuts pass, of course, but most 'soft' fruit is questionable. Grapes go

not ill, but I have sometimes felt a moral qualm in marrying a grape too nearly to what is in a way its grandmother. Some accept peaches and nectarines; I rather doubt, though I am very fond of the latter. Strawberries have many votes, and some good stories, in their favour. But the one fruit which seems to me to go best with *all* wine, from hock to sherry and from claret to port, is the medlar, an admirable and distinguished thing in and by itself, and a worthy mate for the best of liquors."

A final word may be said as to the ordering of Claret in a restaurant. Refuse any wine, however moderate it may be in price, if it is not absolutely brilliant when poured out. All wine-drinkers are agreed that, with a very few negligible exceptions, wine must be absolutely clear and transparent if it is fit to drink. In the mysterious process of development which goes on unceasingly so long as a wine is alive, it throws off in the form of sediment the impurities and by-products, such as cream of tartar, as they are formed, and it is essential that the wine should be drunk free from all harmful and unnecessary substances, which would ruin its harmony. A sound wine is not clear when it is still fermenting or when its sediment has been shaken up, and for the time being it is not fit to drink. If a wine is permanently cloudy, it is unsound and to be avoided.

IN PRAISE OF CLARET

Mr. André L. Simon in *Wine and Spirits*

“The Bordeaux ruby is still the most beautiful gem in that vinous crown of which France is so justly proud. The art of man never has produced anything more beautiful than nature can show, and there is nothing more beautiful in nature than harmony. The excellence of Claret, and the reason why it may rightly claim precedence over all other wines is that it is the most harmonious and natural of all wines. . . . In the making of Claret, the art of man intervenes only to remove every possible cause of imperfection, but not to assist nor to hamper nature. In order to obtain the best ‘must,’ all imperfect berries are carefully removed when the grapes are picked, and in order to avoid the wine acquiring from its lees too pungent a taste, it is ‘racked’ from time to time, but nothing is added either to the must or the wine to improve its colour, body, flavour or alcoholic strength, all of which are due to the species of grapes used in making the wine, to the nature of the soil, the aspect of the vineyards where such grapes were grown, and the natural phenomenon of fermentation. Moreover, there is in Claret a more perfect harmony between its component parts than in any other wine. There is neither a lack nor an excess of

grape sugar, acidity, tannin, or alcohol, all of which so marvellously harmonise that Claret charms without ever palling on the palate and stimulates the brain without ever overbalancing it.

“One of the great charms of Claret is that it adapts itself to all tastes, constitutions, and purses. The varieties of Claret, the differences in excellence and in price, in type and style, are much greater than is the case with other wines.”

CLARET AND HEALTH

As concerns the value of wine in general and Claret in particular, from the medical point of view, much might be written. When the Paris Wine Week was held in March 1922, the well-known physician Dr. Jacques Bertillon laid some striking facts before the Congress, demonstrating the beneficent effects of wine. Thus he showed that in wine-drinking districts tuberculosis was far less prevalent than elsewhere. North of the wine-growing limit, in France, deaths from consumption vary between 125 and 338 for every 100,000 inhabitants, while the Southern districts where wine is the staple drink the figures fall to between 68 and 150. He estimates that if the inhabitants of the 28 Northern departments drank wine to the same extent as those of the Southern and Central depart-

ments, the annual death roll from that disease would fall from 42,190 to 25,500.

Another well-known doctor, Dr. Gagey, points out that in France appendicitis has increased very considerably during the last quarter of a century, that is to say, since the great phylloxera crisis, which led to the adulteration of wine and introduced the habit of water drinking.

There is abundant expert evidence as to the wholesomeness of Claret. "The diabetes patient," says the *Lancet*, "may safely take an occasional glass of Claret. Clarets are generally avoided by the gouty and rheumatic; but this is certainly a mistake. In several cases of atonic gout a glass of good Claret daily has been taken with great benefit, although the patients may have been told that whisky, gin, and brandy were the only permissible forms in which they should take alcohol."

"We of the old school," writes Dr. Mercier-Lebon, "drink our bottle of Médoc when dining, with the result that we are gay and well, free from appendicitis, and are esteemed, I believe, by the ladies far more highly than are the decadent young men of to-day."

Dr. Arnozan, Professor at the Faculty of Medicine of Bordeaux, is even more categorical in his praise of Claret. "Wine," he says, "is a valuable beverage, exercising a wholesome influence on the digestion and

the nervous system: it is a hygienic beverage in the true sense of the term. . . . Among all wines, red Bordeaux is certainly that which combines all the required qualities in the highest degree." The same authority writes elsewhere: "Nothing is more effective for toning up the organism and restoring to the stomach its digestive functions than the regular consumption of good red Bordeaux."

"DON'TS" FOR THE CLARET DRINKER

1. Don't think of drinking fine Claret without decanting.
2. Don't forget to stand your Claret bottles up the day before you wish to decant from them.
3. Don't put the Claret bottle in hot water before decanting the wine.
4. Don't try to decant from the bottle to the last teaspoonful.
5. Don't think you will enjoy good Claret with fish. You won't.
6. Don't eat an anchovy savoury if you are enjoying your Claret.
7. Don't smoke or let anyone else do so before the Claret is finished.
8. Don't drink Claret the day after it is opened. You won't like it. Don't throw it away, it is all right for jellies or sauces.

9. Don't offer fine Claret to a cocktail drinker. He won't appreciate it.
10. Don't consider that wine bottled at the château always represents a good vintage or a good wine. It does not.
11. Don't drink Claret in a restaurant without having it decanted and seeing that it is in brilliant condition.
12. Don't use small glasses.
13. Don't fill Claret glasses more than half full, if you wish to enjoy the bouquet.
14. Don't import Claret in cask and expect the wine to taste the same as it did abroad. It won't.
15. Don't use a cradle bottle basket except for decanting in emergencies.
16. Don't keep wine too long. If it is fine and ready to drink make occasions to use it. Many a bin has gone down the sink through being too good to use! Remember it can't be better, and you might die!

WINES OF THE MÉDOC IN THE ORDER OF THE OFFICIAL CLASSIFICATION OF 1855

CHÂTEAU

COMMUNE

First Growths

Lafite	Pauillac
Margaux	Margaux
Latour.	Pauillac

Second Growths

Mouton-Rothschild	Pauillac
Rauzan-Ségla	Margaux
Rauzan-Gassies	"
Léoville-Lascases	Saint-Julien
Léoville-Poyferré	"
Léoville-Barton	"
Durfort-Vivens	Margaux
Lascombes	"
Gruaud-Larose-Sarget	Saint-Julien
Gruaud-Larose-Faure	"
Brane-Cantenac	Cantenac
Pichon-Longueville	Pauillac
Pichon-Longueville-Lalande	"
Ducru-Beaucaillou	Saint-Julien
Cos-d'Estournel	Saint-Estèphe
Montrose	"

Third Growths

Kirwan	Cantenac
D'Issan	"
Lagrange	Saint-Julien
Langoa	"

CHÂTEAU

COMMUNE

Giscours	Labarde
Malescot-Saint-Exupéry	Margaux
Cantenac-Brown	Cantenac
Palmer	"
La Lagune	Ludon
Desmirail	Margaux
Calon-Ségur	Saint-Estèphe
Ferrière	Margaux
Marquis d'Alesme-Becker	"

Fourth Growths

Saint-Pierre-Sevaistre	Saint-Julien
Saint-Pierre-Bontemps-Dubarry	"
Branais-Ducru	"
Talbot-d'Aux	"
Duhart-Milon	Pauillac
Poujet	Cantenac
La Tour-Carnet	Saint-Laurent
Lafon-Rochet	Saint-Estèphe
Beychevelle	Saint-Julien
Le Prieuré	Cantenac
Marquis-de-Terme	Margaux

Fifth Growths

Pontet-Canet	Pauillac
Batailley	"
Grand-Puy-Lacoste	"
Grand-Puy-Ducasse	"
Lynch-Bages	"
Lynch-Moussas	"
Dauzac	Labarde
Mouton-d'Armailhacq	Pauillac
Le Tertre	Arsac
Haut-Bages	Pauillac
Pédesclaux	"
Belgrave	Saint-Laurent
Camensac	"
Cos-Labory	Saint-Estèphe
Clerc-Milon	Pauillac
Croizet-Bages	"
Cantemerle	Macau

GRAVES AND ST. EMILIONNAIS

There is no official classification of the Wines of the Graves or the St. Emilionnaï Districts, but the following are among the finest growths :

CHÂTEAU	GRAVES				COMMUNE
Haut-Brion, first growth, ranking with the three first growths of the Médoc					Pessac
La Mission-Haut-Brion					„
Pape-Clément					„
Haut-Bailly					Léognan
Larrivet-Haut-Brion					„
Domaine de Chevalier					„
Smith-Haut-Lafite					Martillac

ST. EMILIONNAIS

Ausone					St. Emilion
Cheval-Blanc					„
Clos Fourtet					„
Canon					„
La Conseillante					Pomerol
L'Évangile					„
Pétrus					„

